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Letter dated 4 April 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing with reference to yesterday's press briefings by your spokesman Fred Eckhard and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) regarding the understanding between you and the Pakistan Government for providing assistance to the Afghan refugees.

I wish to recall that during your meeting with the Chief Executive last month, it was agreed that the United Nations would follow a two-pronged approach to simultaneously provide assistance to the Afghan refugees who had freshly arrived in Pakistan as well as to the affected people inside Afghanistan. Pakistan committed itself to extend every assistance to the United Nations agencies in setting up the relief camps on the Afghan side of the border. This principle of simultaneity was meant to prevent a further exodus of Afghan refugees to Pakistan and to create conditions for the return of those who had sought refuge in Pakistan in the weeks immediately after the imposition of new sanctions by the Security Council against Afghanistan. We are disappointed that the United Nations has not been able to redeem its pledge in accordance with the principle of simultaneity, mutually agreed upon. The United Nations agencies have yet to take any step to establish camps and mobilize relief efforts inside Afghanistan to stop the further influx of Afghan refugees.

I am sure you will agree that Pakistan's record in looking after the Afghan refugees has been impeccable. For years, Pakistan has single-handedly shouldered the burden of Afghan refugees. We gave shelter to 4.5 million Afghan refugees during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Pakistan, already faced with the burden of over 2 million Afghan refugees, however, cannot be expected to cope with the continued influx of refugees, particularly as international assistance dries up. Pakistan's capacity to receive a new influx of displaced persons and refugees is simply exhausted. The paucity of funds at the disposal of UNHCR to look after over 2 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and hundreds and thousands of new arrivals is reflected in the meagre $2 million available at their disposal. This was even

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acknowledged by you. It is unfortunate that, in response to your appeal for the estimated $275 million needed for inside Afghanistan and the new arrivals, pledges of less than $45 million have been made so far.

Pakistan has kept the Jalozai camp open to UNHCR, humanitarian aid workers, bilateral aid donors and NGOs who have been providing relief assistance to refugees. However, we cannot accept UNHCR's intention to allow the registration of refugees at Jalozai without the provision of relief inside Afghanistan, as such registration would only induce Afghans to move in greater numbers to Pakistan. This is also contrary to the understanding reached during your visit to Pakistan.

The solution of the problem lies not in focusing on the Jalozai camp alone or in establishing new refugee camps in Pakistan, which would only attract more refugees, but in setting up camps on an emergency basis on the Afghan side of the border.

In forwarding this note, I wish to place on record the disappointment of the Government of Pakistan at the remarks of your Spokesman in his press briefing, blaming Pakistan. At the same time, I wish to reiterate our commitment to honour our obligations and continue our discussions with a view to finding a comprehensive solution to this humanitarian problem.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 46, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Shamshad **Ahmad**